

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SUVA 00187 270631 Z

16

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AID-20 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 FRB-02

INR-09 NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12 CIEP-02

LAB-06 SIL-01 SAL-01 OMB-01 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 L-03

NSC-10 PA-03 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 RSR-01 INRE-00 /143 W
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P 270456 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SUVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1870

INFO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SUVA 187

E. O. : ADS DECLASSIFY MARCH 26, 1974

TAGS: ELAB, ECON, PINS, FJ

SUBJECT: GOVT OF FIJI PREPARES LEGISLATIVE CRACK DOWN ON
UNIONS.

1. GOF INCREASINGLY ALARMED HARMFUL EFFECT ON NATIONS
ECONOMY OF PROLONGED AND REPEATED STRIKES AND HIGH WAGE DEMANDS
BY INCREASINGLY RESTLESS LABOR UNIONS. OVER PAST SEVERAL
MONTHS STRIKES AND ILLEGAL WORK STOPPAGES HAVE SEVERELY
DISRUPTED FIJI' S INTERNAL ECONOMY AS WELL AS THE IMPORTANT
TOURIST TRADE. AT PRESENT SEVEN THOUSAND MEMBER BUILDERS
ON STRIKE OVER WAGE DISPUTE IN VIOLATION EXISTING CONTRACT.
BANK WOKERS THREATENING ILLEGAL STRIKE MARCH 30 OVER SIMILAR
ISSUE. NATIONALLY IMPORTANT DOCK WORKERS HAVE ANNOUNCED
PLANS STRIKE IN MAY IF DEMANDS FOR 150 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE
REFUSED.

2. GOF PREPARING TWO PRONGED LEGISLATIVE ATTACK COMBAT WHAT
IT CONSIDERS SERIOUS THREAT TO ECONOMY. FIRST STEP IS
INTRODUCTION NEW LABOR LEGISLATION GIVING MIN LABOR BROAD
POWERS DECLARE ILLEGAL ANY STRIKE IMPARING QUOTE VITAL
SERVICES UNQUOTE TO NATION AND DISBAND ANY UNION PERSISTING
ILLEGAL STRIKE AS DEFINED IN LEGISLATION (SEE SEPARATE
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PAGE 02 SUVA 00187 270631 Z

AIRGRAM) . SECOND STEP INVOLVES WAGE PRICE FREEZE WHICH GOF
CONTEMPLATES IMPLEMENTING PRIOR NEXT ROUND MAJOR LABOR
NEGOTIATIONS EARLY MAY (SEE SUVA 186).

3. COMMENT: GOF HAS FLOUNDERED ABOUT HELPLESSLY FOR NEARLY TWO
YEARS SEEKING BRING STABILITY FIJI' S INFLATION PLAGUED
ECONOMY. TWO SUCCESSIVE LABOR MINISTERS HAVE PROVED EQUALLY
INEFFECTIVE IN COPING WITH LABOR PROBLEMS. FRUSTRATED BY
INABILITY COPE AND ALARMED BY DETERIORATING ECONOMIC SITUATION
GOF LED BY RATUMARA NOW APPEARS TURNING BELATEDLY TO FIRM
MEASURES BEARING STAMP OF STRONGMAN GOVERNMENT. SKIFF

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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